United Nations A/55/926–S/2001/438

General Assembly
Security Council

Distr.: General
3 May 2001

Original: English

General Assembly
Fifty-fifth session
Agenda items 40 and 164
The situation in the Middle East
Measures to eliminate international terrorism

Security Council
Fifty-fifth year

Identical letters dated 2 May 2001 from the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and to the President of the Security Council

The Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations presents his compliments to the Secretary-General of the United Nations and, upon instructions from his Government, has the honour to present to him the reply of the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic to the two letters addressed to him by the Permanent Representative of Israel dated 16 April 2001 (S/2001/367) and 18 April 2001 (A/55/908-S/2001/385) (see annex).

The Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations would be grateful if the text of the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda items 40 and 164, and of the Security Council.

01-35920 (E) 040501 040501

Annex to the identical letters dated 2 May 2001 from the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and to the President of the Security Council

[Original: Arabic]

During the past few days, Israel has pursued its serious acts of aggression against the forces of the Syrian Arab Republic and against Lebanon, as well as its inhumane practice of repression against the Palestinian people. In order to cover for its crimes, which greatly exceed what, in the language of the United Nations, is described as genocide, the Permanent Representative of Israel in his letter dated 16 April 2001 addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2001/367) and in his letter dated 19 April 2001 addressed to the Secretary-General (A/55/908-S/2001/385) deliberately misled international public opinion by distorting the facts, turning the killer and aggressor into a victim and portraying the victim as acting outside international law and in violation of United Nations resolutions.

In view of the importance of explaining the truth and the need to reply to the Israeli allegations, contained in the two letters, which exhibit grave disdain for the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the resolutions hitherto adopted by various United Nations bodies since the end of the 1940s, the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic would like to affirm the following facts:

1. The true reasons for the worsening situation in the Middle East region are essentially attributable to the continuing Israeli policies of occupation, expansion and aggression. In this regard, Israel has persistently defied the will of the international community as embodied in hundreds of resolutions adopted by the Security Council and General Assembly and officially treated it with open contempt. Israel still refuses to recognize the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, who are living the bitter experience of repression, poverty and expulsion and whom it is killing without any intentional restriction on its vast military strength and its possession of the most lethal and destructive weapons, which it has no hesitation in deploying in its constant aggression against this defenceless people. Moreover, its aggression against Lebanon and its people did not end with its occupation of the capital, Beirut, and the perpetration of the Qana massacre which claimed as its victims hundreds of children and women who had sought a refuge of safety in the United Nations base there. On the contrary, it continued to the point of driving tens of thousands of Lebanese from their homes and using the scorched-earth policy to set fire repeatedly to their land and homes. The Lebanese National Resistance has forced Israel's humiliating defeat and withdrawal from most Lebanese territories and is still struggling, as in the case of all peoples suffering from foreign occupation, with the aim of liberating the remaining Lebanese territories in accordance with the Charter and resolutions of the United Nations in order to rescue the prisoners abducted from their homes by Israel in flagrant defiance of international legitimacy and international law. What international legitimacy is Israel talking about when it has continued its occupation of most of southern Lebanon for over 23 years and when the Shab'a farmlands are still under occupation and numerous Lebanese remain prisoners in Israeli jails? Furthermore, Israel's occupation of the Syrian Golan has hitherto continued since 1967, despite the international community's demand for it to withdraw from these territories in accordance with Security Council

resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). In violation of international humanitarian law, in particular the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, Israel continues to force Israeli nationality on the inhabitants of the Golan. The Israeli occupation authorities also bury toxic and radioactive waste in the territories of the occupied Syrian Golan, thus contaminating the soil and water resources and exposing the lives and livelihoods of the village inhabitants of the occupied Syrian Golan to the risks of constant pollution and destruction of the environment. The number of displaced persons forced by Israel to leave their villages and farms in the Golan now amounts to over half a million individuals, who are still looking forward to the day when the occupation ends and they are able to enjoy the human rights enjoyed by the other peoples of the world. Is there anything in any of these practices to indicate Israel's respect for international legitimacy and the resolutions of the United Nations? Without exception, the entire international community is aware that Israel has become a symbol of contempt for international law and international legitimacy. It is truly ironic to see Israel demanding that others should respect United Nations resolutions and international legitimacy when it is the one which, for half a century, has defied that legitimacy and refused to implement those resolutions.

2. In many of its letters, Israel resorts to propagating its usual lies. What elicits ridicule is that it attempts to predicate these lies on the Declaration on Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Cooperation among States in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, as contained in General Assembly resolution 2625 (XXV) of 24 October 1970. The fact of the matter is that Israeli acts and practices are condemned in every word, line and page of this Declaration. Does this Declaration permit the occupation of others' territory by force, aggression against States Parties, the killing and expulsion of their peoples and the burning of their land, the use of internationally prohibited weapons and the description of the struggle of peoples fighting for the restoration of their rights and land as terrorism? The selective use and distortion of the resolutions and declarations of the United Nations by the representatives of Israel exemplifies nothing but inadmissible excess, a shameful attitude and a perverse interpretation of everything called for by such resolutions. The Declaration contained in General Assembly resolution 2625 (XXV) considers it "essential that all States shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State, or in any other manner inconsistent with the purposes of the United Nations". Israel also disregarded the provision contained in the same Declaration that "the territory of a State shall not be the object of military occupation resulting from the use of force in contravention of the provisions of the Charter". This Declaration further emphasizes that "no territorial acquisition resulting from the threat or use of force shall be recognized as legal". As for Article 51 of the Charter, it provides that "nothing in the present Charter shall impair the inherent right of individual or collective self-defence if an armed attack occurs against a Member of the United Nations". What is worth pointing out is that the Palestinian and Lebanese resistances carry out their activities in defence of their occupied territories and in response to the assaults and crimes carried out by Israel.

3. The Syrian Arab Republic has condemned terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and called for the convening of an international conference to define terrorism and distinguish it from the just struggle of peoples for liberation. The Syrian Arab Republic would like to reaffirm its solidarity with the peoples suffering

from the scourge of terrorism and its afflictions. However, on the basis of its belief in the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and in the United Nations resolutions which accord peoples the right to liberate their land from foreign occupation, it regards foreign occupation and the repression, killing and genocide practised and still being practised by Israel against the Palestinian people, the Lebanese people and Syrian citizens in the occupied Golan as embodying terrorism. Israel has killed scores of leaders of the Palestinian people in numerous countries of the world and its aircraft have shelled innocent civilians in Beirut and the villages of southern Lebanon. Israel has shelled and hijacked civilian aircraft in international airspace and seized boats and ships in international waters. Israel has not hesitated to use terrorism in all of its forms and manifestations, including State terrorism, anywhere in the world. Israel justifies its terrorism, its threat to peace and security in the Middle East region and its killing of innocents on the pretext of its security at a time when the most urgent need, clearly, is for the security of the Arabs in the occupied territories. It is Israel which brought terrorism to the Middle East region and it is Israel which practised it. Israel should know that occupation and the usurpation of rights bring it no security. The names of many leaders of Israel have appeared on the posters of those wanted for trial for having perpetrated terrorist crimes. The killing of thousands in the massacres of Deir Yassin, Qibya, Qana and Sabra and Shatila and of the United Nations envoy, Count Folke Bernadotte, and his assistant in Jerusalem are but a few of the many examples of Israel's terrorist practices. The Arab Summit Conference recently convened in Amman adopted a proposal to seek the trial of these leaders by an international tribunal for war criminals.

4. The Lebanese Government has replied in scores of letters lodged with the Security Council and the General Assembly to the Israeli allegations concerning the relationship between the Syrian Arab Republic and Lebanon. In an attempt to mislead international public opinion, Israel ignores the fact that it was the Syrian Arab Republic which extinguished the flame of the Lebanese civil war that Israel helped to ignite and subsequently feed for over 20 years. Israel is mistaken if it imagines that its lies about the Syrian role in Lebanon will fool anyone who followed and learned of the enormous Syrian sacrifices made to end that war, which Israel hoped would result in the partition of Lebanon and destroy the unity and shared coexistence of the Lebanese people, and even lead to its Balkanization. Israel is fully aware that the Syrian Arab Republic and Lebanon have a pact of brotherhood and cooperation which governs the relationship between the two countries. Consequently, our country supports Lebanon by providing everything that it needs to defend its territory and achieve its security and stability. Israel takes its efforts to mislead too far in endeavouring to talk about its commitment to international legitimacy and the Blue Line at a time when the United Nations has affirmed that Israel has seriously violated that Line on over 400 occasions during the past few months.

5. The Syrian Arab Republic opened the way to the Middle East peace process in 1990 and made the achievement of peace one of its strategic choices in accordance with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and the principle of land for peace. Israel, however, in accordance with a calculated strategy, turned the peace process into a process intended to force the Arabs to capitulate and enable it to obtain through that process what it failed to obtain during the war. The Israeli leaderships, including the head of the present Government, declare on flimsy

pretexts justified only by the desire for expansion and settlement that they will not withdraw from many parts of the West Bank and Gaza Strip or from the occupied Syrian Golan to the line of 4 June 1976. Israel also continues to occupy the Lebanese Shab'a farmlands and to take Lebanese prisoners, using those same flimsy pretexts as its excuse. The attack recently launched by Israeli aircraft on a Syrian military site in Lebanon is another crime on Israel's record, which is full of acts of aggression, killing and terrorism. The countries of the world have condemned this aggression and hold Israel responsible for its serious consequences. On the basis of its strict understanding of international law, the Syrian Arab Republic has also affirmed that it reserves its legitimate right to defend itself against any aggression. What is the peace which Israel talks about after constantly occupying Arab territories for over 24 years, and how long does it want the Arabs to voice no demand for their land and usurped rights? Is Israel intending to enact a new law on aggression and killing to replace international law, international humanitarian law and the Charter of the United Nations?

6. The facts in the Middle East are plain to see for anyone who wishes to acquaint themselves with them. If Israel thinks that pursuing the fatal course of "keep on lying and you might be believed" will lead to the result which it desires, it is seriously mistaken. Israel must abandon its racist and aggressive policy against the Arabs because there is no future for this policy, which has proved futile. The only available option for the achievement of a just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East is the implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), as well as Israel's full withdrawal from all occupied Arab territories, including the West Bank, Gaza Strip, Jerusalem, the Syrian Golan to the line of 4 June 1967 and the Shab'a farmlands, and the restoration of the usurped national rights to the Palestinian people. Thus will a just peace be achieved. Such is the proper way to achieve security and dignity for all.